

To: Members and friends of the CIP Advisory Group
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Using OCLC member copy - an experiment

Earlier this year the CIP Division conducted an experiment that ran for more than 3 months and included over 2000 records from OCLC. These were records that were originally created by LC during the CIP galley stage, distributed to utilities like OCLC, and were then upgraded by a variety of institutions, with those upgraded versions of the records bumping the original but incomplete LC records from the OCLC database.

We wanted to see first if the number of updated records in OCLC made it worth our time in searching and downloading these records, and the answer was yes – there were enough records to make it worthwhile. We also wanted to see if there were any technical problems associated with identified and downloaded records, and the answer was yes – there were a number of problems we encountered. During this experiment, we didn't take the time to really evaluate the quality of cataloging – that will come in our second experiment next month.

In the total of 2,072 records reviewed, we found 766 records with serious problems – that's 37%. The problems could be divided into two main categories – problems we created ourselves, and problems created by others.

1. An example of the first type of problem is the 655 genre heading. We reviewed a number of records in which our downloaded copy of the OCLC record lacked 655s present in the original LC CIP record. We began wondering why libraries were deleting this field! It turns out that they were not deleting the field – the software we use in conjunction with our ILS to download OCLC records was stripping the 655s from the records. Our software – originally designed to support copy cataloging activities – has been modified to allow the import of 655s and other fields.
2. An example of the second type of problem is the 042 authentication code – specifically, "pcc" for the Program for Cooperative Cataloging and "lcac" for LC's Annotated Card program for children's literature. Again, we reviewed a number of records in which the 042 had been deleted. In this case, almost all of the records were from one institution, and when OCLC inquired on our behalf, it turned out that one individual, following a procedure he had been taught in another library, was routinely deleting the 042.

All of the problems we encountered during this experiment have been addressed, and thanks to our friends at OCLC and to our own technical experts, all of the problems have been fixed. We're now planning a second, much smaller, more controlled experiment in the hopes that our findings will allow us to use the upgraded records in OCLC in our CIP verification work.